



## **Calls mount for release of Tribunal funding**

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Government and rights officials appealed to the UNDP Tuesday to release Australian funding for the Cambodian side of the Khmer Rouge tribunal, which is facing a budget crisis in the wake of corruption allegations.

The Australian government pledged \$456,000 in April 2008 to the Cambodian side of the UN-backed court, but the UNDP, which manages donor funding, has not released the money.

The Cambodia Daily reported Tuesday that Australia had authorized the release of funds. The UNDP said Tuesday it “was not in a position to release the funds at this time.” “There must be a resolution of the allegations” of corruption before the money is released, UNDP said.

“If UNDP does not agree to release the funds to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, it will affect the regular process of the tribunal,” Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon said Tuesday. “The United Nations in its management of the funds provided for the Khmer Rouge tribunal should follow what the donors want.”

The government is “doing everything to ensure the transparency, morale, work effectiveness and increased confidence” at the court, he said.

The call for funding comes after failed talks this month between a senior UN legal adviser and the Cambodian government on how to address issues of corruption at the court, where Cambodian staff members have alleged they were forced to pay kickbacks for their positions.

The two sides are at odds over whether the identities of those who complain about corruption should be protected. The two sides have so far agreed on a parallel “mechanism” whereby complaints on the UN side are handled by the UN and those on the national side are handled by Cambodia.

Thun Saray, president of the rights group Adhoc, said the Cambodian side of the court risked running out of money if funding is not released.

“This can damage the whole process of the Khmer Rouge tribunal,” he said. “The donors are not concerned about providing funds, because the funds will be used fairly with the anti-corruption mechanism.”

Established in 2006 after nearly a decade of wrangling between the UN and Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge tribunal has only now begun its first trial, for former prison chief Duch, who has been facing Trial Chamber judges over the past few weeks for his role as the head of Tuol Sleng prison.

Even with Duch’s trial underway, the Cambodian administration was only able to pay its staff salaries for March after a direct infusion of \$200,000 from Japan.

Helen Jarvis, a spokeswoman for the tribunal, said the court lacked around \$4.3 million for 2009. The tribunal has not called for the release of funding from UNDP, she said, as the matter was in progress.

“We are still hoping the funds will come in time,” she said.